

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CANBER 01581 130258Z

10
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W
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R 130232Z MAR 75
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5265
INFO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 1581

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, AS, CB
SUBJECT: EVACUATION OF AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY

REF: A) CANBERRA 1561; B) PHNOM PENH 4497

1. DURING REVIEW OF SITUATION IN CAMBODIA MAR 13 DFA
(EVANS, INDO-CHINA SECTION) TOLD EMBOFF THAT BASIC REASON
FOR DECISION TO EVACUATE AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY WAS SECURITY
OF POCHENTONG AIRPORT. AS IT IS PLANNED TO REMOVE EMBASSY'S
CONFIDENTIAL FILES AND COMMO EQUIPMENT, SECURITY OF AIRPORT
WAS CRITICAL POINT. EVANS CONCEDED THAT SITUATION IN PHNOM
PENH APPEARED TO BE marginally better, in sense that it had
NOT DETERIORATED AS RAPIDLY AS PRESS REPORTS HAD INDICATED.
GOODRICK (LAOS DESK), WHO PARTICIPATED IN DISCUSSION, SAID
THAT DFA HAD NO RPT NO INFORMATION ON STATUS OF FIGHTING IN
AND AROUND PHNOM PENH, APART FROM WHAT IS APPEARING IN PRESS.

2. EMBOFF NOTED THAT, AT RECENT LABOR PARTY CONFERENCE IN
EARLY FEBRUARY, PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM HAD SAID THAT THE
GOA HAS RELATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT THAT CONTROLS THE
CAPITAL. WHITLAM SAID AUSTRALIA IS POISED TO MAKE A CHANGE
IN CAMBODIA OR SOUTH VIET-NAM WHEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES RE-
QUIRE BUT ADDED THAT THE AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY WOULD REMAIN
IN THE CAPITAL IN THE EVENT OF A CHANGE. EVANS SAID THAT
THERE HAS BEEN NO RPT NO CONSIDERATION GIVEN TO A CHANGE
IN RECOGNITION OF GKR, IN FAVOR OF GRUNK, THOUGH AUSTRALIAN
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EMBASSY IS TO MOVE TO BANGKOK, TEMPORARILY.

3. COMMENT: BELIEVE OUR EMBASSY IN PHNOM PENH IS CORRECT
IN SURMISING THAT DECISION TO EVACUATE AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY
WAS ESSENTIALLY POLITICAL ONE (PARA 2, REF B), WHICH AN-
TICIPATES EARLY SEIZURE OF PHNOM PENH BY COMMUNISTS. WE
BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THIS IS LARGELY AN ASSESSMENT BY
PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM (WHO IS CURRENTLY ACTING FOREIGN
MINISTER AS WELL), AS DFA DESK OFFICERS ESSENTIALLY SHARE
AUSTRALIAN CHARGE MILNE'S VIEW OF SITUATION. DFA WILL PROB-
ABLY HAVE marginally GREATER INFLUENCE ON FOREIGN MINISTER
WILLESEE WHEN HE RETURNS TO AUSTRALIA ON MAR 15, THAN IT
HAS ON WHITLAM, WITH HIS OBSESSION WITH MOVING WITH TIDE
OF HISTORY IN INDO-CHINA.
HARROP

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